

**Council on Postsecondary Education  
Quality and Accountability Policy Group  
March 24, 2006**

**Use of National Survey of Student Engagement  
to Improve Student Learning**

Question four of the Council's Public Agenda addresses the preparation of college graduates for life and work in Kentucky. The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) is an important tool in measuring progress in this area. The NSSE survey collects quality of learning data from undergraduate students that can be used to support institutional improvement and accountability. The Council also has used NSSE information to assess the level of civic engagement of Kentucky's undergraduates.

Public four-year institutions implemented the NSSE in 2001, 2003, and 2005. With three years of data, the Council staff is encouraging campuses to review the trend data to identify aspects of undergraduate education that should be addressed.

The Council is sponsoring a Student Engagement Conference May 23 and 24 as a pre-conference event in advance of the Faculty Development Conference to feature sessions with the NSSE Institute staff. In 2005, the NSSE staff completed a two-year research project examining 20 educationally effective colleges. The Documenting Effective Educational Practice Project (DEEP) is now finished, and there are several publications designed to assess campus characteristics and policies that contribute to high levels of student success. Teams of representatives from the institutions will be invited to participate at the conference. A meeting of Kentucky's chief student affairs officers is planned for April to review the use of NSSE in student leadership and support service programming and to help plan sessions for the May conference. Sessions also will be targeted for best practices based on the findings from the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) for two-year institutions.

The CCSSE is designed to assess student learning environments on two-year college campuses. The Kentucky Community and Technical College System is implementing the CCSSE for the first time in the spring of 2006. Bluegrass Community and Technical College, Hazard Community and Technical College, Henderson Community College, Somerset Community College, Southeast Kentucky Community and Technical College, and West Kentucky Community and Technical College are the first campuses to administer the survey. All remaining KCTCS colleges will have participated in CCSSE by summer 2008.

At the request of the Quality and Accountability Policy Group chair, campuses were polled to determine how the NSSE results have been used to date. Overall, Kentucky four-year institutions find NSSE to be a valuable survey. The implementation of the NSSE survey statewide provides a rich data source for institutions working to improve student learning.

At Western Kentucky University NSSE figures prominently as an assessment tool in support of accreditation activities. Each institution applying for renewal of accreditation is required to develop a Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP), a carefully designed and focused course of action that addresses a well-defined topic or issue(s) related to enhancing student learning. WKU's QEP focus, *Engaging Students for Success in a Global Society*, uses NSSE results to gauge the plan's impact on the institution, and the survey will now be implemented annually. In fact, WKU was a featured institution in the NSSE 2005 Annual Survey Results report *Exploring Different Dimensions of Student Engagement*, specifically in the chapter on *Using NSSE in Accreditation*. WKU is one of two public institutions that selected improvement in NSSE scores as the institutional choice key indicator for the performance funding system.

The University of Louisville is using NSSE results in multiple ways to support of its upcoming SACS review and QEP development. Uofl's QEP topic is *Ideas to Action and Critical Thinking Skills to Solve Community Problem*. NSSE is part of Uofl's assessment of student learning outcomes in general education assessment. Additionally, the Task Force on Institutional Effectiveness developed the *Vision\*Focus\*Action Report* in 2002, based on NSSE results, to identify institutional changes to improve student learning outcomes.

Eastern Kentucky University will also be using the NSSE results in the upcoming SACS reaffirmation, in particular through the QEP process. ECU administrators are supporting the NSSE workshop to learn ways to increase the response rates and expand the use of the results.

Institutions that have already completed accreditation renewals and are further out from the QEP development, such as Northern Kentucky University and Morehead State University, have built NSSE data into their institutional assessments. MoSU requires academic programs to assess student engagement in annual assessments and four-year reviews. Both the NSSE and the Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE) will be used in developing strategy to support the institutional reviews.

NKU is the second university to select improvement in NSSE scores as the institutional choice key indicator for performance funding. NKU's Professional and Organizational Development Center has agreed to participate on a faculty member panel presentation, *Using National Survey of Student Engagement Results: Kentucky Faculty Perspectives*, submitted to the 2006 Faculty Development Conference. Kentucky State University and Western Kentucky University also have agreed to participate on the panel.

Kentucky State is also noted in the NSSE 2005 Annual Survey Results report *Exploring Different Dimensions of Student Engagement*, as an institution that used NSSE survey results to improve relations between KSU students and the local community and to streamline ways for students to get information about services on campus.

At the meeting John Hayek will present summary results for the 2005 NSSE administration at the four-year public universities.

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